

Tales from the Snow Ball by ZJpotter

Series: [Friends Don't Lie \[5\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, Fluff, Some of this is kind of sappy

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Will Byers & Eleven | Jane & Dustin Henderson & Maxine Mayfield & Lucas Sinclair & Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

Some missing moments from the Snow Ball of 1984.

Tales from the Snow Ball

"Hey, El?"

"Hm?"

"Where are you?"

"Mirror."

Hopper follows the sound of his daughter's voice to the bathroom. She's standing in front of the mirror, leaning in close to get a good look at her face.

"Hey," Hopper says and knocks on the open door with his knuckles.

She turns towards him, "Pretty?"

He knows she's asking if she looks pretty. She asks that a lot and it's kind of unnerving. He looks her over. She's dressed in a nice blue dress, something the Wheeler girl picked out, and her face is covered in makeup and her hair is tamed and held back by barrettes. She looks so much more grown up than she did a few hours ago when she was dressed in one of his shirts.

Yet she almost looks happy.

"Pretty."

El smiles and then steps back from the mirror, "Ready."

Only Hopper's not ready. He's not. His little girl is about to go to her first school dance, about to go outside into a world where she's in danger. She's more than capable of defending herself, but still. He can't guarantee she'll be safe. He's not about to let her know that.

Hopper doesn't move from the door frame.

"Jim? Ready."

She's only called him 'dad' once. They have to work up to that.

"Wait. I have something for you," Hopper says and fishes something out of his pocket.

It's a little blue band smaller than his palm.

"This used to- this belongs to my girl."

El looks down at it and then back at him, "Sara."

"That's right. It holds her hair up away from her face. A ponytail, she called it. I want you to wear it."

He extends his hand and El stares for a second more before giving him hers. He slips the band over her wrist, securing it so it won't fall off. It's weird seeing it on El's wrist when it spent so long on Sara's hair. It doesn't bother him like he thought it would.

El examines her wrist before speaking in an even softer voice than the one she has, "Thank you."

Hopper clears his throat and nods and blinks his eyes a few times to get rid of the not-tears in his eyes.

"Come on kid let's go get you to Mike."

Lucas shifts on the bleachers, the music rattling through them. Dancing is fun, but it's exhausting. The slow dances are momentarily over in favor for more upbeat music. He can spot Dustin, still on the floor, twirling Nancy around. The two are doubling over with laughter, particularly at Dustin's dance moves. Mike and El are somewhere off to the side, talking, but still swaying and being utterly gross. (Secretly, it doesn't bother him so much anymore but what kind of friend is he if he doesn't complain once or twice?). Will's still off with Jennifer Hayes. She's introducing him to her little gaggle of friends and he can't see Will's expression from here so he hopes that everything is fine and his friend is enjoying himself. That leaves him. Sitting on the hard bleachers with Maxine Mayfield.

"So we kissed?"

"Yep."

"You kissed me," Lucas says.

"Yep."

"What does that mean?" Lucas asks.

Max raises an eyebrow.

"When people kiss aren't they like," Lucas searches for the right words, "a thing? Like girlfriend and boyfriend or something? So are we-"

"I don't like you like that," Max says a little too quickly.

"Why did you kiss me then?" Lucas asks, a little more than confused.

She kissed him. Which obviously meant she liked him. That or girls were more confusing than he thought them to be.

"Because!"

"Because you like me," Lucas grins facing her, "Admit it MadMax you like me."

Max rolls her eyes, "Do not."

"Do too."

"Do not!"

"Do too!" Lucas says and his grin turns victorious, "You kissed me."

Max stares at him, really takes him in. They're really close now (when did that happen?) with their faces a few inches apart. It's probably the most intense staring contest he's ever been involved in. He doesn't dare breaking away because looking away means accepting defeat, it means giving into Max's point.

Max is the one to break the contest.

"No." Max says and leans back and faces the gym again.

Except Lucas can still feel Max's leg against his and his heart flips a little bit. Of course he has to like Max. Max and her flaming red hair, and her stubborn attitude, and her Californian skateboard. Max, the girl with the psycho older brother who hated his guts. He couldn't stay away even if he tried. What was it that was in one of Nancy's dumb romance movie? "Absence makes the heart grow fonder?". Well if that was true, he'd like her ten fold if she ever really stayed away like her brother wanted.

Snap.

He's a goner.

Lucas rubs his hands on his pants. They're sweaty, which is gross, but somehow Max ignores that and reaches over and takes one of his hands in hers. The hands are linked together between them and Max hasn't looked at him again.

"You're not so bad Stalker," she says.

Lucas can't stop from smiling. He knows what she really said.

(Maybe I do like you.)

"You either MadMax."

A small almost bashful smile creeps up on Max's face and he knows she understood.

(I know. I like you too.)

"Okay, okay, Lando Calrissian or Han Solo?" Dustin asks.

"Dude," Mike says, eyes going wide.

"Han Solo," Lucas says, "Hands down."

"Over Lando?" Mike asks.

"In a fight? Oh come on Mike! Han won the Falcon from Lando."

"Yeah, Lando was a little backstabber in Empire Strikes Back," Dustin says.

"Han was taken down by carbonite," Mike says.

"Anyone would be taken down by carbonite!" Lucas says at the same time Dustin exclaims "because Lando sold him out!"

Max leans in, "Leia would totally beat both of them."

All three boys turn to her with incredulous expressions. They keep forgetting that she knows Star Wars too.

"No she wouldn't," Mike shakes his head.

"Yes she would," Max says, "She practically runs the resistance."

A smile spreads across Will's face. He wants to save this moment forever. It's something you'd want to savor and look back on when you need a good laugh. Max is fiercely defending Princess Leia over Han and Lando and Dustin, Lucas, and Mike are rebutting her stance with equal amounts of fervor. Lucas looks about ready to give in and join Max's team ("Not the dark side Lucas!" Someone shouts) and then Dustin throws in Gandalf and it all goes down hill. Lucas tosses in Venkman and Max argues that by that logic she can throw in Indiana Jones and Mike throws in Penguin and the two character fight has morphed into an all out, multi-universe brawl. Ellie's sitting next to Mike, looking utterly confused by all of this.

Will leans over and shoots her a smile. Ellie's lips quirk up into a little smile.

The nickname had come easy to him. He felt like he knew Ellie, longer than he has, and on some weird deeper level that he can't explain. Whatever it is, it doesn't seem right to call her Eleven, or El(although everyone else calls her that) or even Jane. Ellie just seemed to slip out his mouth one day and whoops Ellie liked it and he couldn't go back.

So yes, this moment seems wonderful. His friends are all here in the school gym, happy even if they're arguing. There's nothing more he could want.

That's when he catches the sight of Johnathan. His brother is taking pictures of a pair of girls, their smiles bright and happy. What really draws him in is the camera. A camera. Cameras capture moments all the time!

"Put Indiana Jones on Hoth and he wouldn't last a minute!"

"Put him on Aldeeran and he wouldn't last a minute," Lucas smirks a bit.

Max, Dustin, and Mike turn to him, eyes wide.

"Dude," Dustin says.

"That's so not right," Max says.

Lucas shrugs and Will chooses this moment to interject.

"Hey guys," he says and all eyes are on him, "We should take some pictures!"

Mike immediately makes a face; Mike hates having his picture taken.

"Yeah alright," Lucas says.

Dustin hops down from his spot in an upper bleacher and holds out his hand for Max.

"M'lady."

Max rolls her eyes and nudges Lucas so he can move and they can go down. Even Ellie gets off the bleachers. The only one left is Mike.

"Mike c'mon take the picture," Dustin says.

Mike doesn't move. Will starts to think this was a bad idea. He wants a picture, he really does, but if Mike is unhappy...

"We don't have to-"

"No Will." Max frowns, "Get off the stinkin' bleacher Mike."

"How else are we supposed to remember Dustin's hair?" Lucas smiles

and Dustin blinks in offense.

Mike cracks a smile.

"Yeah real funny," Dustin says, "That's not going to work. Mike isn't going to move unless he realizes pictures mean pictures with El. Alone. Just the two of them. Making kissy faces and-"

"Okay shut up," Mike is red faced but he's off the bench.

His long legs make quick strides to the group and he ignores Lucas and Dustin's high-fives in order to look at Ellie.

"Pictures?" she says, her features immediately lighting up.

Mike nods, a smile Will likes to call the "it's my love smile" forming on his face, "Yeah. Pictures."

Will likes to think the pictures will be amazing. They took way more than they should have. There's one with him and all the boys who unanimously decided to pick him up. There's another with him and Mike. There's one with Dustin and Lucas and then one with Dustin, Lucas, and Max. Lucas and Max have one making silly faces, Will has a hugging one with Ellie. Ellie has a group one with everyone but Max because she wanted one with her first friends. Ellie has one with Mike and they look like they should be married already. Then there's the last one, the group photo with no silly faces just smiles. Will wants to frame that one.

The party's winding down as the last few kids are running around waiting for their parents to come and get them. Her bunch, Mike and his friends, are sitting on the side watching Dustin twirl Eleven around on the empty floor. They're moving sloppily, dancing off-beat to the music, but they're laughing. Will's cracking himself up, face red, and Nancy doesn't think she's ever seen him laugh so hard.

Dustin dips Eleven and stands her back up, "And that is how you do it."

"Oh come on," Max says but she's smiling too.

"Think you can do better Mayfield?" Dustin asks.

Oh so that's what it is. A dance off.

"I do," Max stands up and goes down the bleachers, stopping in front of Will, "Will?"

Will's laughter cuts off and he absolutely pales, but Mike and Lucas gave him thumbs up, so he takes Max's hand and stands in the middle of the floor.

Lucas nudges Mike, "Are we next?"

Mike makes a face and shoves him in the shoulder. Both boys are laughing afterwards.

"Hey Nancy."

Nancy's not going to lie and say she didn't jump a little. Jonathan's standing behind her, hands clutching his camera, his usual small smile on his face. There are no more kids to take pictures of and Nancy can see the relief on his face. She knows he's more than happy when he's behind his camera ,but he's been at it all night with no breaks.

Nancy smiles, "Hey camera man."

Jonathan's smile stretches a tiny bit wider, "Hey. Wait, I said that already. Oh gosh-"

Nancy laughs a bit and places a hand on one of his hands. One of his fingers is tapping the side of the camera.

"Take a break, you've got camera fingers," she says and Johnathan lets her take the camera out of his hands to place it on the table.

Now it's just them and Nancy let's her hand slide into his. Johnathan's fingers close around hers.

It's nice. They're nice. They're nice together when they're not trying

to survive the horrors of Hawkins and are just being, well, normal teenagers. They can focus on homework and eating lunch on the roof of Jonathan's car rather than whether or not they need to run from government agents. They can focus on Christmas presents instead of other dimensional monsters. Now that, is nice.

"You look nice."

Nancy smiles, looks up through her lashes, "Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Well thank you," she says, "You clean up well Byers."

Jonathan gives her a chuckle and opens his mouth to say something and is cut off by a laughter.

Will and Max are still on the dance floor. Will's a mess of uncoordinated limbs and he's tripping over his feet and Max's but both are grinning. Max twirls Will around and Dustin and Lucas are getting a kick out of it. Even Eleven is laughing. It's not dancing, Nancy doesn't think she can call it that, but it looks fun.

The big sister part of Nancy can't help but kick in.

She extends her other hand to Jonathan, a smirk playing on her pink lips.

"Wanna show them how it's done?"

Jonathan looks from her to the "party" and back, "I-I don't dance. I can't dance Nancy."

"You can too dance. Remember Mrs. Wilkes' birthday party? You danced all day."

"That was third grade."

Nancy nods, "It was. We had a lot of cake that day."

"You looked pretty, you had the-the pink dress on with the little black shoes," Jonathan says, face a little flushed.

He's always been more than a little observant. A year ago it was slightly creepy ,but now it was endearing.

"What song was playing?"

Jonathan lets out a groan, "Brandy. She used to play that all the time."

Nancy sings, "Brandy wears a braided chain made of finest silk from the North of Spain."

Jonathan shakes his head and licks his lips, looking somewhere above Nancy. Nancy knows he knows the words.

Jonathan finally relents with a pained smile,"A locket that bears the name of the man that Brandy loved."

Nancy laughs and Jonathan makes a comment about blaming her for having that song stuck in his head.

"It'll just be just like third grade," Nancy promises and squeezes his hand for good measure.

Jonathan looks at her, searches her for a second, before he nods and the two find themselves out on the dance floor in front of the party.

"Make way and let the masters show you how it's done," Nancy teases and Will and Max happily sit down.

"Go Jonathan!" Will cheers.

"As long as you beat Dustin I'm cool!" Lucas shouts and Dustin elbows him.

Nancy wraps her arms around Jonathan's neck and his hands slowly find her waist, holding her close to him. Mike makes a gagging noise.

"This okay?" Jonathan asks and Nancy nods because yes, it's definitely okay.

Slow dancing with Jonathan is most definitely okay.

They're swaying to Elvin Bishop and Jonathan's eyes go wide and Nancy throws her head back and laughs.

"Didn't she play this song too?"

"Yes! I think it was just to flirt with Mr. Brians across the hall."

"Nancy!"

"Oh come on Jonathan! They totally had a thing going on!"

Jonathan looks a little uneasy, "Then I guess it fits?"

"What do you mean?"

"This song. Are we-are we a thing then?"

Nancy thinks it over. She thinks about Jonathan's hands on her waist and her arms around him and how close they are. She thinks that Jonathan looks exceptionally nice tonight. She thinks about the quick moments they share waiting for Will to come upstairs from the basement of her house or the moments where they're reading in the library at school. She thinks of that night at Murray's that will probably be engraved in her mind forever. She thinks of the matching scars on their palms. She thinks that this wasn't meant to happen but maybe, maybe it's not so bad.

Nancy thinks that Fooled Around And Fell in Love has chosen the most ridiculous time to play.

Nancy leans in and Jonathan leans down so they can rest their foreheads together.

"I think," she says as they sway, "that we can be if you want to. Do you want to?"

"I-Steve. What about Steve?"

Oh. That's still a rocky area, even though they technically aren't together. It wasn't an exact breakup though.

"We talk to Steve," Nancy says, "but Jonathan?"

Jonathan releases her for a moment to twirl her up and then back into him. "I can't dance" Nancy scoffed to herself.

"Yeah?"

"Do you want to?"

"Yes."

Nancy smiles, "I do too."

Johnathan grins, a real one this time, "Me too."

"Ugh, they're so mushy."

"It's going to get worse trust me."

"I think they're sweet."

"You will until they start sucking face in front of us all the time."

Nancy ignores the comments from the peanut gallery. Instead she focuses on Jonathan, the two of them swaying to the beat. Yeah. This is nice.

Mike smiles down at El. She's looking at their friends who are noisily chattering in front of them, talking about who knows what. It doesn't matter. He'll find out what it is later.

Right now El is here holding his hand and looking the most beautiful he's ever seen. Well, she always looks beautiful, but she's smiling and that makes her more beautiful.

He hopes he's not saying this out loud.

El stops walking and her mouth pulls down into a small frown. Mike faces her, concern written all over his face.

"Hey, you okay?"

"Jim's here."

Mike looks over to her line of sight. The chief is leaning against Mrs.Byers' car, talking and sharing a cigarette with the woman. Mrs.Byers suddenly smiles when she sees Will.

El's still frowning.

"I had fun today," Mike says and El looks at him.

"Me too," she turns to him then, "I'm glad you asked me Mike."

Mike gives a bashful smile, "Which time?"

El laughs and Mike's heart flutters. He loves that sound. It's probably one of his favorite sounds. They look at each other for a second and El starts laughing again.

"What? What's so funny?" He starts laughing too.

El shrugs. Mike thinks he could stay here forever. Maybe not right here because it's cold outside ,but in this moment. The moment where El is smiling and holding his hand and their slow dancing and taking silly group pictures with the party even though he doesn't like having his picture taken. The one where everyone is together and everything is as it should be.

Of course Nancy calls him.

Mike bites back a scowl. She'd probably be more than happy to hang around Johnathan for a few more minutes. She can wait, can't she?

He sees Hopper about to open his mouth to call El, but Mrs.Byers places a hand on his arm and gives him a look. Thank goodness for Mrs.Byers.

"I'll call you," Mike says when he turns back to El, "Every night."

She leans forward and Mike presses his forehead against hers.

"We'll be together again soon," he says, "and I can show you cool things. Or we can hang out with Lucas, and Dustin and Will. Or we can just eat Eggos at my house. Whatever you want."

A painful pang in his chest reminds him he makes promises like these too often. He ignores it. If he and El can finally go to the Snow Ball, then any of his promises may work.

El wraps her arms around him and he holds her close.

"Bye Mike."

"See you soon El," he says instead because "Goodbye" seems to finite.

El leans back and places a gentle kiss on his cheek before she leaves him.

Dustin hops in the car, where Steve is already blasting music. Steve smiles at him, eyes bright and expecting.

"How'd the party go?"

"It was great Steve!"

"I told you my tricks would work," Steve nudges him in the shoulder, "Did you get to dance with Max?"

"No."

"Who?"

"Oh, um, well," Dustin says and looks down at his hands.

Steve is going to be angry, if he tells him. He can see it now. Friends don't dance with other friends exes. He's pretty sure it's a rule. If Steve is angry with him he'll never get him to drive him anywhere ever again.

"Spit it out dude we don't have all night," Steve says as he backs out the parking space.

Maybe if he can let it out gently. Gracefully. That way feelings will be spared and everyone can still be friends.

"I danced with your ex-girlfriend!" Dustin blurts out and then clamps a hand over his mouth.

Steve looks at him for a second, "What?"

"I dance with Nancy! She danced with me! She felt bad and-"

Steve drums his hand on the steering wheel, face distorted into a

scowl. He doesn't say anything for a while, just sits in anger.

"Steve?" Dustin says and when he gets no reply he tries again, "Steve? Steve, I'm sorry man. I'm sorry. Talk to me Steve! I'll never dance with Nancy again. Please Steve-"

He's cut off by booming laughter. Steve is practically crying, he's laughing so hard.

"Steve? Steve are you okay?"

"Your face I'm sorry," Steve says.

Dustin's eyes widen, "You're not mad?"

"No, why would I be mad?"

Dustin punches him in the shoulder, "What the heck Steve? That's not funny."

"It was. It really was."

"It won't be when you find a bunch of legos in your bed."

Steve turns the wheel, still laughing, "Yeah, okay."

"It hurts Steve."

"Mhm."

"It does."

"Okay Dustin. Okay."

- []

Author's Note:

Yes, I just made the one month post mark' Thanks for reading! I hope you enjoyed!
Songs I referenced:

Fooled around and fell in love- Elvin Bishop
Brandy (You're a fine girl)- Looking Glass
Not 80s songs but they're still catchy.